We will fully implement the requirements of the Taif national accord and abide by the seven points adopted unanimously by the Council of Ministers and respect Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). Therefore, we will dispatch the army, assisted by UNIFIL, to deploy in the South.

Today we send the army from the nation to the nation. We send it for the sake of our people in the South, for the sake of those who remained in their homes, and for the sake of those returning to their homes. The army will defend their lands, preserve their homes, jobs and livelihoods, safeguard their liberty and security, and enforce the law. The mission of the Lebanese army in the South will be to defend the rights of citizens and to defend the right and responsibility of the State to extend its sovereignty over the entire territory of the nation and serve as the people's guardian and protector. There will be no areas or places that are off-limits or out of the army's control, no military installations other than its own, and no armed groups other than its forces so that there will be no armed force not under the authority of the Lebanese State.

The Lebanese Army, the army of all Lebanon, the army of all Lebanese, comes to you. Rally around the army and stand by it as it stands with you and for you.

My fellow citizens,

The State will assume all its relief and reconstruction responsibilities with the assistance of our Arab brothers and our many friends throughout the world. This will be done transparently and without discrimination against anyone. We do not do this as a favour to anyone because the State belongs to everyone and it is the State's responsibility to safeguard the rights of all its citizens. We will adopt the fastest and most efficient working methods.

We must work seriously and quickly to achieve national and economic revitalization, shake off stagnation, stimulate growth, and find employment opportunities for young people. None of this will be possible without political stability. Political stability will renew the faith of the Lebanese people in the future and compel our brothers and friends to return to Lebanon, help it and invest in it. We pledge to redouble our efforts and work with you all — the State, the people, civil society, and the private sector.

The Lebanese all stood firm in the face of the enemy, led by the people of the South, Baalbek, the southern suburbs of Beirut and other areas of Lebanon. The State owes a debt to those Lebanese that must be honoured without hesitation or prevarication. They were also the State's protective and supportive shield. The State must do all that is within its power to keep them in the fold, win their confidence and look after their rights and interests. The State is the State of our people in the South and of all the afflicted areas. It is their State both by right and by responsibility, and this implies employment, comfort, security and a commitment to them on the part of the State.

The Lebanese Government, in cooperation with local and international experts and in coordination with Arab and international construction, economic and financial institutions, will lose no time in developing reconstruction plans and the necessary economic programmes and policies. These will be implemented with great transparency, effectiveness and speed. We want to be and to remain equal to the gravity of the situation and to the aspirations and hopes of the Lebanese people.

The South is in our hearts and in our minds. It is present today in the hearts and minds of everyone who loves Lebanon, fears for it and is mindful of its experience. The steadfastness and resistance of its villages and towns have made their names a part of the memory of every Arab youth.

We are faced with great responsibilities and must take them up if we do not want to lose the freedom for which we paid with the blood of our martyrs, the steadfastness and unity of our people and the efforts of the freedom-makers of our past and present.

We are faced with momentous challenges, challenges that relate to the meaning of Lebanon, its existence, its future and the nature of its political system. Our beloved, noble and proud country has passed through some difficult and cruel weeks. We need to face ourselves, our consciences, our morals and our responsibilities. A great amount of work must be done in order to strengthen the State and the army, reinforce democracy and accountability and achieve a high level of performance. This is the proper language, which we should not hesitate to use, for the establishment of a free and strong State, a State which is capable of extending its sovereignty over its entire territory through its legitimate armed forces. This means that only the State may retain armed forces, as you, the people of Lebanon, agreed to in the Charter of National Reconciliation at Taif and re-emphasized in the seven points adopted unanimously by your Government. I do not act on behalf of a group, sect, political group or party, but as the Prime Minister of Lebanon. There is room only for the State and this State cannot be monopolized, exclusively possessed, surrendered or bargained away.

My fellow Lebanese,

We are faced with the challenge of preserving the State in order to preserve the nation, preserving unity of decision-making in order to preserve the democratic, civilian political system. Every Lebanese is entitled to preservation of his life, his property, his dignity and his freedom, and the only means to achieve that is the constitutional State, its democratic system and its national army. That State cannot be replaced by statelets or anything of the kind.

Let us all stand for ourselves, our interests and our affiliations so that we may continue to have a free and independent State. Let us all stand by that State so that our beloved nation may continue in being. And let us all stand by the nation so that Lebanon will remain. Lebanon will indeed remain, Lebanon will rise again, and its future will rise from the South, the South of Lebanon, thanks to the zeal and determination of all Lebanese, for the sake of all Lebanon.

Long live Lebanon! Long live the people of Lebanon!